I. Introduction

Imagine a brilliant young man in the fourth century, restless, gifted, and deeply troubled. His name was Augustine. He grew up in North Africa with a praying Christian mother named Monica, but he wanted nothing to do with her faith. Instead he chased pleasure, power, and intellectual respect. He lived with a woman for years without marrying her, fathered a son out of wedlock, and threw himself into the latest philosophies and religions of his day. He was ambitious, eloquent, and successful by the world's standards, yet his heart remained empty and divided.

For years the truth about God was present around him. His mother's prayers, the Scriptures, and the witness of faithful Christians kept crossing his path. Yet something in him kept the seed from taking root. The worries of reputation, the pull of old habits, and the desire for worldly success acted like choking thorns. He later wrote in his Confessions that he would pray, "Lord, make me pure, but not yet." The word was near, but it had not gone deep.

Then one afternoon in a garden in Milan, everything changed. Augustine was in agony over his divided heart when he heard the voice of a child chanting, "Tolle lege, tolle lege" — "Take up and read, take up and read." He picked up a copy of the Scriptures lying nearby and read the first words his eyes fell upon from Romans 13:13-14: "Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."

In that moment the word finally took root. Augustine later described the experience as a sudden, decisive change. The old desires lost their grip. He turned from his former life, was baptized, and eventually became one of the most influential leaders the church has ever known. He served as bishop of Hippo, wrote profound books that still shape believers today, and spent the rest of his life defending the faith and pastoring God's people. The same man whose early years looked like a field where nothing good could grow became a field that produced lasting fruit for centuries.
Augustine's story is not unique. It is the story of what happens when the word of God meets different kinds of hearts. Some hear it for years and it never takes hold. Others receive it with excitement but fall away when life gets hard. Still others let the worries and desires of this world choke it out. But some hear it, understand it, turn from what is wrong, and endure in faithfulness until the end. Those hearts produce a harvest that glorifies God and blesses others.

This is exactly what Jesus described in the Parable of the Sower. Turn with me to Matthew chapter 13. Jesus told a story about a farmer scattering seed on

four different kinds of soil. Then He explained that the seed represents the word of the kingdom and the soils represent the different ways human hearts respond to that word.

In verses 19 through 23 He said:
“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”
The seed is the same in every case. The difference is always the soil.

The Bible gives us living examples of each kind of soil in the lives of the kings of Judah. Some of these kings let the word get snatched away before it could ever take root. Others received it with initial excitement but had no depth when pressure came. Still others allowed the worries of their kingdoms and the desire for security to choke what God had spoken. And some, by God’s grace, let the word go deep, responded with understanding and obedience, and produced fruit that strengthened God’s people.

What makes these stories even more powerful is what the prophet Ezekiel tells us in chapter 18. God says that when a wicked person turns from his sins and begins to practice justice and righteousness, none of his past transgressions will be remembered against him. He will live. But when a righteous person turns away from righteousness and commits iniquity, his former righteous deeds will not be remembered and he will die in his sin. In other words, God looks at the direction of our hearts and whether we endure in faithfulness to the end.

Jesus Himself said in Matthew 24:13, “But the one who endures to the end, it is he who will be saved.”

Today we are going to look at several kings of Judah through the lens of this parable. We will see hearts that stayed hard, hearts that started well but did not finish well, and hearts that, sometimes after long seasons of evil or compromise, turned and bore good fruit. My prayer is that as we examine their stories, the Holy Spirit will help each of us examine the soil of our own

hearts.

So let me ask you a simple but searching question as we begin: What kind of soil is your heart right now? Has the word of God taken deep root in you, or has it been snatched away, choked by worry, or left shallow when life tested you? And if you have wandered or grown cold, are you willing to turn today so that you can endure faithfully to the end?

Let us open our hearts to what God wants to show us through His Word and through the lives of these kings.

II. The Parable Explained Briefly

Jesus told this story to help us understand something very important about how people respond to God's Word. The farmer scatters the same seed everywhere he goes, yet the results are completely different depending on the ground it lands on. Jesus makes it clear that the seed represents the word of the kingdom, the message of who God is and what He requires. The four kinds of soil represent four different conditions of the human heart.

Some hearts are like the hard path beside the road. The word lands on the surface, but it never sinks in. Before it can take root, it is snatched away. Other hearts are like rocky ground with only a thin layer of soil on top. The word is received with quick enthusiasm, but there is no depth. When pressure or trouble comes, the little growth that appeared quickly withers. Still other hearts are like soil full of thorns and weeds. The word begins to grow, but the competing concerns of life — worry, the desire for security, the pull of other priorities — choke it out until it produces nothing of lasting value.

Then there is the good soil. Here the word goes deep, is understood, and produces a real harvest. Some plants yield thirty times what was sown, some sixty, and some a hundredfold. The difference is never in the seed. The seed is the same in every case. The difference is always in the soil — the condition and response of the heart.

This is why the stories of the kings matter so much. They show us these four kinds of hearts in real life. Some of them let the word get snatched away before it could ever take hold. Others received it with initial excitement but had no depth when life tested them. Still others allowed the worries of their position and the desire to protect their kingdoms to choke what God had spoken. And some, by God's grace, let the word go deep, responded with understanding and obedience, and produced fruit that strengthened His people for generations.

What makes these stories especially encouraging is something the prophet Ezekiel tells us. God does not simply write people off because of how they started. When a person turns from what is wrong and begins to walk in what is right, that turning matters. Past sin is not held against the one who genuinely repents. At the same time, God calls us to endure in that right direction all the way to the end.

As we look at these kings, we are not just studying ancient history. We are looking into a mirror. The same word that came to them has come to us. The question is what kind of soil it is finding in our hearts today. Let's begin by looking at those whose hearts were like the hard path beside the road.

III. Roadside Soil: When the Word Is Snatched Away

Jesus described one kind of heart as the hard path beside the road. The seed lands on it, but it never sinks in. Before it can take root or produce anything, the birds come and snatch it away. In His explanation, He said this happens when someone hears the word of the kingdom but does not understand it. The evil one immediately removes what was sown.

This is not a heart that fights against the word with open hostility at first. It is a heart where the word simply never takes hold. It stays on the surface. Other things such as evil influences, wrong desires, the pull of power or security, keep the word from ever going deep. The result is a life marked by consistent disobedience to what God has clearly said, with little or no lasting fruit.

The Bible gives us several kings of Judah who lived with this kind of heart. The word of God was present in their world through the law, through the memory of faithful kings who had gone before them, and sometimes even through direct prophetic warnings. Yet in each case the seed was snatched away before it could take root. Their reigns were characterized by evil that the biblical authors openly condemn, and they left behind no positive spiritual legacy.
Let's look at three of them.

First, consider King Jehoram. He was the son of the good king Jehoshaphat. He had every advantage of a godly upbringing and a father who had sought the Lord. Yet as soon as he became king, he chose a different path. He married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and Scripture says he "walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done" (2 Chronicles 21:6). To secure his power he murdered all his own brothers. He led Judah into the same idolatry that had corrupted the northern kingdom. The

prophet Elijah later wrote to him that because he had not walked in the ways of his father or grandfather but had caused Judah to prostitute itself with other gods, severe judgment was coming. Jehoram died in terrible pain from a disease in his bowels, and no one mourned his passing.

The word had been available to him. He had seen what faithful leadership looked like in his own home. But something in his heart kept it from taking root. The influence of his evil wife and the desire for power snatched the Word away before it could ever grow.

His son Ahaziah followed the same pattern. He became king at a young age and reigned for only one year. Scripture tells us he “walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly” (2 Chronicles 22:3). He allied himself with the northern kingdom’s wicked king and was eventually killed during Jehu’s purge of Ahab’s descendants. There is no record of any reform, any seeking of God, or any positive spiritual impact. The evil influence that had already taken hold in his father’s generation simply continued through him. The seed of God’s word never had a chance to grow.

Then there is King Ahaz, who reigned many years later. He is described as one who “did not do right in the sight of the Lord his God, as his father David had done” (2 Kings 16:2). Instead he followed the ways of the northern kings. He sacrificed his own son in the fire, worshiped the gods of the surrounding nations, and even closed the doors of the temple in Jerusalem. When he faced military pressure from the kings of Aram and Israel, he did not turn to the Lord. He turned to the king of Assyria for help and even copied the pagan altar he saw in Damascus. The biblical record says he became even more unfaithful to the Lord in his time of distress (2 Chronicles 28:22). The word of God, the same word that had guided David and other faithful kings, was present, but it never took root in Ahaz. Evil influences, the desire for political security, and his own willingness to follow the practices of the nations around him snatched it away completely.

Notice the common thread in these three kings. In each case the word of God was not absent from their world. They lived in a nation that had the law, the temple, and the memory of kings who had walked with God. Yet something consistently prevented the word from taking root. For Jehoram and Ahaziah it was the powerful evil influence of Athaliah and the house of Ahab. For Ahaz it was the combination of idolatry, the pursuit of political alliances, and a heart that preferred the ways of the nations over the ways of the Lord.

This kind of heart is still very much with us today. There are people who grow up hearing the word of God, who are around Christian influences, who even know the stories of faithful believers, yet the seed never goes deep.

Sometimes it is snatched away by strong negative influences such as wrong relationships, cultural pressure, or the example of people they admire who live in open disobedience to God. Sometimes it is snatched away by the simple desire to fit in or to gain security and status in this world. The word is heard, but it never takes root because other things are allowed to keep it on the surface.

The tragedy is that this condition does not stay neutral. When the word is continually snatched away, the heart grows harder. Over time a person can move from simply not understanding the word to actively resisting it and leading others away from it, just as these kings did.

As we look at these examples, the question for each of us is whether there are influences or desires in our own lives that are keeping God's Word from taking root. Are there relationships, ambitions, or fears that are snatching the seed away before it can grow? The good news is that no heart has to stay hard. But the first step is recognizing when the word is landing on soil that is not receiving it.

In our next section we will look at another kind of soil, hearts that receive the word with initial joy but lack the depth to endure when pressure comes.

IV. Rocky Soil: Initial Joy but No Depth

Jesus also described a second kind of heart. This one receives the word with immediate enthusiasm and even shows some quick growth. But there is no depth. When pressure, trouble, or testing comes, whatever began to grow withers away. Jesus said this happens when someone hears the word and receives it with joy, yet has no firm root in himself. As soon as affliction or persecution arises because of the word, he stumbles.

This is not a heart that rejects the word outright from the beginning. It is a heart that responds positively at first but lacks the depth to endure when obedience becomes costly. The word produces an emotional or dramatic reaction, but it never goes deep enough to withstand real pressure.

One of the clearest biblical examples of this kind of heart is found in King Saul, the first king of Israel. When Samuel first anointed him privately, God changed Saul's heart. Scripture records that the Spirit of God came upon him mightily and he prophesied among the prophets. People who had known him before were amazed and asked, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Samuel 10:9-11). There was genuine initial joy and a visible change. God had given him a new heart and public confirmation of his calling.

Yet when the first real tests of obedience came, the lack of depth became obvious. In 1 Samuel 13, facing the pressure of an approaching Philistine army and Samuel's delay, Saul took matters into his own hands and offered the sacrifice himself instead of waiting as God had commanded. Samuel confronted him with these words:

"You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, for now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not endure." (1 Samuel 13:13-14)

Later, in 1 Samuel 15, God gave Saul a clear and specific command to completely destroy the Amalekites. Saul partially obeyed but spared the best of the livestock and King Agag. When Samuel confronted him, Saul's true condition surfaced. He said:
"I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice." (1 Samuel 15:24)

Even in his confession, he shifted the blame onto the people. The initial joy and dramatic beginning had not produced a heart with deep roots in God's word. When the pressure of public opinion and the cost of full obedience came, he stumbled.

We see something similar later in the life of King Asa, though his story begins differently. After years of walking with God and experiencing dramatic answers to prayer, Asa faced a new military threat from Baasha of Israel. Instead of turning to the Lord as he had done before, he relied on a political alliance with the king of Aram and even used temple resources to secure it. When the prophet Hanani confronted him with the word of God, Asa became angry, imprisoned the prophet, and oppressed some of the people. In his later years, when he became severely diseased in his feet, he still did not seek the Lord (2 Chronicles 16:7-10, 12). The early pattern of trust and responsiveness gave way when new pressures tested him. What had once taken root did not prove deep enough to endure.

This kind of heart is common. Many people have genuine moments of joy when they first encounter God's Word or experience a dramatic spiritual beginning. They respond with enthusiasm, make public commitments, and show visible change for a season. But when obedience becomes costly, such as when following God means losing approval, facing conflict, or giving up something they value, the growth withers. The word was received, but it never went deep enough to produce lasting roots.

The warning here is not against joy or emotional response. The problem is the lack of depth. A heart that only responds when things are easy or exciting will eventually stumble when real testing comes. The word must go beyond the surface if it is going to sustain us when pressure arrives.

In the next section we will look at another kind of soil, the hearts where the word begins to grow but is eventually choked by competing priorities and worries.

V. Thorny Soil: The Word Choked by Competing Priorities

Jesus described another kind of heart where the seed begins to grow but never reaches maturity. The word is received and starts to take root, yet other things quickly crowd it out. Jesus explained that this happens when someone hears the word, but the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it until it becomes unfruitful.

This is not a heart that rejects the word from the start, nor one that simply lacks depth. It is a heart where competing concerns gradually take over. The desire for security, the fear of losing position or approval, and the pull of other priorities slowly squeeze out wholehearted obedience to God. Over time the word is still present, but it no longer produces meaningful fruit.
The kings of Judah and Israel give us several clear examples of this kind of heart. In each case the word of God had come to them, and they had responded in some way at first. But the worry of protecting their kingdoms or maintaining their status eventually choked what God had spoken.

One of the clearest and most influential examples is King Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel. After the kingdom divided, God had given Jeroboam a clear promise through the prophet Ahijah. If he walked in God’s ways, the Lord would establish his house. Yet almost immediately Jeroboam became afraid. He said in his heart:

“Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.” (1 Kings 12:26-27)

Out of fear of losing the kingdom, Jeroboam created his own religious system. He made two golden calves, set up new places of worship, appointed priests who were not from the tribe of Levi, and changed the timing of the feasts. Scripture says this became a sin that led the people astray (1 Kings 12:30).

What began as a political worry quickly choked out obedience to God's clear commands about worship. This pattern became known as "the sin of Jeroboam," and nearly every northern king after him repeated or worsened it. The worry of losing power had choked the word at the very foundation of the northern kingdom.

King Solomon shows a similar pattern later in his reign. He began with extraordinary wisdom given directly by God and a heart that sought what was right. Yet over time the desire for political alliances, great wealth, and many wives gradually took hold. Scripture records that when Solomon was old, "his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been" (1 Kings 11:4). The very things he had accumulated for security and status eventually choked his earlier devotion. The word that had once guided him was crowded out by competing priorities.

We see this same dynamic in King Joash. While the godly priest Jehoiada was alive, Joash did what was right and even led a major restoration of the temple. Jehoiada's strong presence kept many of the negative influences at bay. But as soon as Jehoiada died, the officials of Judah came to Joash, and he listened to them. He abandoned the house of the Lord, turned to idols, and even ordered the stoning of Zechariah, the son of the priest who had protected and guided him (2 Chronicles 24:17-22). The worries and influences that had been held back for years quickly choked the earlier pattern of faithfulness once the external restraint was removed.

Even King Asa, who had walked faithfully with God for many years, showed signs of thorny soil later in his reign. When faced with a military threat from Baasha of Israel, he chose to make a political alliance with the king of Aram rather than trust the Lord as he had done before. He even used silver and gold from the temple treasuries to secure the deal (2 Chronicles 16:1-6). The worry of losing security and control led him to compromise the very trust that had marked his earlier years.

In each of these cases the pattern is the same. The word of God had come. There had been some level of response. But the fear of losing something valuable, such as the kingdom, political security, approval, or status, gradually choked out full obedience. These kings did not start out completely closed to God's word. They simply allowed other concerns to take priority until the word no longer produced fruit.

This kind of heart remains very common. Many people hear God's Word and even respond to it for a season. But when obedience threatens their sense of security, their reputation, their relationships, or their comfort, other priorities

quickly take over. The worry of what they might lose chokes the word until it stops producing real change in their lives.

The danger is that this choking often happens gradually. It rarely feels like outright rebellion at first. It feels like being practical, protecting what matters, or keeping peace. Yet over time the word becomes unfruitful because something else has taken its place.

In our next section we will look at the kind of heart where the word does take deep root and produces lasting fruit, even in the face of pressure. We will also see that God offers hope even when a heart has been choked for a long time.

VI. Good Soil: Hears, Understands, Bears Fruit – And the Hope of Turning

Jesus described one final kind of heart. This is the heart where the word of God goes deep, is truly understood, and produces lasting fruit. Some plants yield thirty times what was sown, some sixty, and some a hundredfold. This is not a heart that merely feels something when the word is heard. It is a heart that responds with understanding and obedience, even when that response is costly. The word takes root and keeps producing fruit over time.

This kind of heart does not mean perfection. It means there is a consistent pattern of hearing God’s Word, understanding what it requires, and acting on it. It also means endurance. As Jesus later said, the one who endures to the end will be saved. Good soil is not measured only by how someone starts, but by whether the word continues to bear fruit all the way to the end.

The kings of Judah give us several strong examples of this kind of heart.

King Jehoshaphat is one of the clearest. He did not seek the false gods that had led previous kings astray. Instead he sought the Lord and followed His commandments. One of the most practical things he did was send officials, Levites, and priests throughout Judah to teach the people the book of the law. He strengthened the kingdom not just militarily but spiritually. When a massive coalition of enemy armies came against him, he did not first rush to political alliances. He gathered the people and prayed a prayer of complete dependence on God. The Lord gave victory without Judah even having to fight. Even though he had one unwise alliance that caused problems, he recovered and continued to walk in a pattern of seeking God and teaching His Word. The seed had taken root and was producing visible fruit.

King Jotham’s record is shorter but consistently positive. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord. He built up the defenses of Judah and

successfully fought against the Ammonites. Scripture simply says he “became mighty because he ordered his ways before the Lord his God.” There is no record of major compromise or turning away. The word had gone deep enough that he consistently ordered his life according to what God had said, and that produced strength and stability.

The strongest and most thorough example is King Josiah. He became king at only eight years old, and while he was still young he began to seek the God of his father David. When the book of the law was discovered during temple repairs, Josiah responded immediately. He tore his clothes in grief and repentance, inquired of the Lord, and led the entire nation in a covenant renewal. He then carried out the most thorough purge of idolatry in Judah’s history, even destroying high places in the former northern territories. He also restored the Passover celebration on a scale that had not been seen since the days of Samuel. The word had not only taken root in Josiah’s heart; it produced abundant, widespread fruit that affected the whole nation.

These kings show us what good soil looks like in practice. They heard the word, understood what God required, and responded with concrete obedience. They removed what God had forbidden and actively taught and lived out what He had commanded. The result was fruit that strengthened God’s people.

But good soil is not only for those who start well. God also offers hope to hearts that have been hard or choked for a long time. This is where the story of King Manasseh becomes so powerful.

Manasseh had one of the longest reigns in Judah’s history, and for most of it he was known for extreme evil. He rebuilt the high places, worshiped false gods, practiced sorcery, and even sacrificed his own son. The biblical authors say he did more evil than the nations God had previously judged. The word of God had been present through his father Hezekiah’s reforms, but in Manasseh’s heart it had been completely snatched away.

Yet God did not leave him there. When Manasseh was captured by the Assyrians and taken to Babylon in chains, he finally humbled himself. In his distress he prayed and entreated the Lord. God heard him, brought him back to Jerusalem, and restored him to the throne. Manasseh then did what he had never done before. He removed the foreign gods and idols, tore down the altars he had built, set up the altar of the Lord, and commanded the people of Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel.

This is exactly what the prophet Ezekiel describes in chapter 18. God says that if a wicked person turns from all his sins and begins to practice justice and righteousness, none of his past transgressions will be remembered

against him. He will live. Manasseh is a living picture of this truth. He had been deeply wicked, but when he turned in genuine repentance, God restored him and enabled him to bear good fruit in the final years of his reign.

By contrast, King Asa shows us what happens when someone who once walked in good soil begins to turn away. After years of faithfulness, Asa compromised under pressure and later refused to receive correction from the prophet Hanani. He ended his life without seeking the Lord even in his illness. The word had once produced fruit in his life, but he did not endure in that direction to the end.

The difference between these kings is not that some were perfect and others were not. The difference is in how they responded to God's Word over time. Some let it take deep root and continued responding to it even when it was costly. Others allowed competing worries or refused correction until the word stopped producing fruit. And in at least one case, God showed that even a long season of evil does not have to be the final story when someone truly turns.

This brings us to the heart of what God is saying to us. The question is not only what kind of soil our hearts have been in the past. The question is whether we will let God's Word take deep root now and whether we will endure in faithfulness to the end. For those who have wandered or whose hearts have grown hard or choked, the story of Manasseh offers real hope. Turning is still possible. God is still willing to restore and bring forth fruit.

In our final section we will bring these truths home with some practical questions and a clear call to respond.

VII. Application and Conclusion

We have walked through the lives of several kings and seen how the word of God landed in different kinds of hearts. Some let it get snatched away before it could ever take root. Others received it with initial joy but had no depth when pressure came. Still others allowed worry and competing priorities to choke what God had spoken. And some let the word go deep, responded with understanding and obedience, and produced fruit that lasted.

Now the question moves from ancient kings to us. The same word that came to them has come to us. So let me ask you a few honest questions as we close.

First, what kind of soil is your heart right now? Has God's Word been landing on hard ground in your life, where it never really sinks in? Has it been received

with some excitement in the past but lacked the depth to hold when real pressure arrived? Or have worry, fear of loss, or other priorities slowly been choking it out?

Second, are there influences or desires in your life that are keeping the word from taking root? Maybe it is a relationship that pulls you away from obedience. Maybe it is fear of what you might lose if you fully follow what God has said. Maybe it is simply the habit of hearing the word without ever letting it change how you live.
Third, if you have started well in the past but have begun to drift or compromise, what needs to change? God is not looking for perfection. He is looking for a heart that turns back to Him and endures in that direction.

And finally, if you have been far from God for a long time — if your story feels more like early Manasseh than like Josiah — do you believe that turning is still possible? The prophet Ezekiel makes it clear that when someone turns from their sin and begins to walk in what is right, God does not hold their past against them. He offers life. The same God who restored Manasseh after years of evil is still willing to restore today.

The call of this passage is both simple and serious. Let the word of God take deep root in your heart. Respond to it with understanding and obedience. Remove what needs to be removed. Trust God when pressure comes instead of turning to your own solutions. And endure in that faithfulness all the way to the end.

Here are a few practical steps that can help:
Start each day by opening God’s Word with the simple prayer, “Lord, help me understand and obey what You are saying.” When you read, ask not only what it means but what it requires of you today. When the Holy Spirit brings conviction, respond quickly instead of letting competing priorities choke it out. When correction comes through Scripture, a sermon, or a brother or sister in Christ, receive it instead of becoming defensive. And when fear of loss tempts you to compromise, remember the examples of the kings who chose security over obedience and the ones who chose obedience even when it was costly.

Most of all, remember that endurance is possible because God Himself is at work in us. He is the one who can soften hard ground, give depth to shallow roots, and pull up choking thorns. Our part is to respond to His Word and keep responding until the end.

If you are here today and you know the word of God has not taken deep root in your life, or if you have wandered and need to turn back, I invite you to respond right now. You can do that quietly in your seat by praying a simple

prayer of surrender and asking God to make your heart good soil. You can also come forward for prayer if you would like someone to pray with you.

The kings of Judah show us that our stories are not finished until they are finished. Some who started well did not endure. Others who were deeply lost turned and finished faithfully. The same options are before us today.

So let us commit ourselves, by God’s grace, to let His Word take deep root, to respond with understanding and obedience, and to endure in faithfulness all the way to the end. For the one who endures to the end will be saved.